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China: Military Diplomacy ☐

The PLA high command has broadened and accelerated senior-level international exchanges in an effort to expand China's international influence, increase opportunities for arms sales and purchases of equipment and technology, ease concern over China's rising power, and deepen PLA leaders' international experience. Some of the top PLA uniformed officers are now among the world's more widely traveled and internationally experienced military leaders. ☐

PLA leaders have expanded already active high-level strategic dialogue with US and Russian defense officials as they open new channels to important lesser powers. In 1996 China hosted more than 140 military delegations from more than 60 countries and sent military delegations to 40 countries. The 1997 pace is even more active, with a broad focus that includes neighboring countries (the Kazakhstani defense minister has visited China twice in the past year), major powers, and a wide range of others (Beijing last week welcomed senior defense delegations from Greece and Uruguay). ☐

In November a PLA deputy chief of staff visited France and Japan, paving the way for higher-level Chinese military visits to both countries. Germany

expects to send its military chief of staff to China for the first time next year and Australia probably will receive the Chinese defense minister and the PLA chief of staff in 1998. The PLA in November also welcomed its first high-level (vice chief of staff) officer from South Korea. ☐

PLA diplomacy has long been a feature of Chinese international exchanges with allies and close friends in the third world; it was central in Beijing's efforts to reassure its neighbors following episodes of assertive Chinese military activities in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea in 1995 and 1996. Criticizing widespread regional concerns over an emerging "China threat," PLA leaders from the defense minister on down used in-person meetings and speeches at home and abroad to dampen the concerns. ☐

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